

CHAPTER 1

NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This mini-dissertation examines perceived discrimination of woman within the mining industry in South Africa. It is alleged that the mining industry is resistant to transformation, more especially when it comes to women empowerment and elimination of woman discriminated. Resistance is not overt, but it is subtle. This study investigates the problem of discrimination against women in the mining sector.

This chapter presents the background to the study, the description of the problem statement, the explanation of research objectives, the outline of the research methodology and the layout of the study.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

This study deals with the experiences of women discrimination. Women discrimination sometimes referred to as sexism can be defined as the belief or attitude that one gender or sex is inferior to, less competent, or less valuable than the other. It is also called male and female chauvinism. It has institutional, cultural, interpersonal, and emotional dimensions and can be manifested in every form of behaviour from subtle gestures and language to covert exploitation and undemocratic structures that foster and perpetuate gender inequality (Willie, Rieker, Kramer and Brown, 1995). Sexism is discrimination on the basis of sex or gender.

Throughout much of the history of Western civilisation woman have been subjected to unfair discrimination due to their gender and sex. They have been subject to various kinds of unfair discriminatory behaviour, attitudes and policies, which have hampered their full integration into the labour market. In South Africa this practice existed in the

mines for thousands of years and it still exist now. It existed as early as when asbestos, diamond and gold deposits were discovered in South Africa (Turrell, 1986). Asbestos mining began in the north-west Cape in 1893. Diamond mining began in 1867 when Erasmus and Louisa Jacob discovered the first diamond in South Africa (Turrell, 1986).

Gold deposits were discovered in the latter half of the 19th century. The discovery of these minerals laid the foundations for transformation of South Africa from an essentially agricultural to a modern industrial economy (Malherbe & Segal, 2000) and it also laid the foundations for discrimination. Since those early days the mining sector which is the single largest provider of employment in South Africa had high levels of woman discrimination. This was due to historical stereotype culture that the mining industry was a man's world and not a place for women. These deep seated cultural beliefs allowed women only limited roles in society. People considered women to be suited for childbearing and home making (Managing a household, especially as one's main daily activity), rather than for involvement in the public life of business or politics. The widespread belief that woman are intellectually (challenged) inferior to men, led most societies to limit women's education to learning domestic skills (Mokubela, 2004). Few women were allowed to work in the mines due to these stereotypical beliefs which are influenced by culture, religion, upbringing and education. The annual report of 1954 of the Department of Mines and Industries indicates that 274 women were at that stage employed in the South African mining environment. In 1963 almost 594 women were employed in different mineral mines (McCulloch, 2003).

Traditionally women participation in the formal South African mining industry was minute. Women working in mines were limited to surface (above ground) work as administrative clerks or nursing injured mineworkers because they were prohibited from working underground. Prohibition of woman from working underground was legalised by the South African government in 1936 when the International Labour Organisation's ("ILO") Convention 45 of 1935 was approved. This principle was incorporated in section 11 of the Mine and Works Act, of 1956, which provided that no female shall work or be

caused or permitted to work underground in any mine (Dikane, 2006). For thousands of women in South Africa's poor towns, had the economic powerhouse minutes from their doorsteps but it were off limits (Johnson, 2006). The Land Act of 1913 and the Pass Law also perpetuated women discrimination.

Women discrimination persisted in the mining industry up until the establishment of the Government of National Unity in 1994. The Government of National Unity initiated transformation in the labour market. It brought changes that resulted in the repeal of discriminatory legislation that regulated labour prior 1994. It introduced various laws that bring about equality in the workplace and that is why the level of woman participation in the mining industry has changed and continues to change. Some of the laws that were enacted are the South Africa Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995, Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997, South Africa Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998, Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 and the Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment Act 53 of 2003. To achieve the objectives of the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act within the mining industry, the Department of Minerals and Energy (DME) introduced the Broad-Based Socio-Economic Empowerment Charter for the Mining Industry and the Balance Score Card.

Because of these laws we now find women working alongside men in the mines in South Africa. Women are now free to work underground and that is why we find more women working in underground in mines. To ensure compliance to new labour laws, mining organisations started changing the culture of their organisations by employing and promoting women in predominantly male dominated positions and putting policies in place to remove the problem of discrimination. Since the post-apartheid constitution was adopted in 1997 people may think that women discrimination in the mining industry is nonexistent considering the increasing number of women working in the mines. The reality according to the literature reviewed is that women discrimination still exists within this industry. Throughout the literature review there was a strong sense that despite the changes in legislation, the South African mining industry is still male dominated and women discrimination still exists.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

We see more and more women employed in the mines, but what is not clear is whether women are still subjected to discrimination, or not. This study seeks to explore the experiences of women discrimination in the mining sector.

South Africa is a country faced with a problem of high levels of poverty and unemployment. Generally there is a belief that empowerment of women and elimination of women discrimination, are some of the key solutions to alleviation of poverty. The government believes that to alleviate this problem several things must to be done and one of them is to eliminate women discrimination and to transform this market by empowering Historically Disadvantaged South Africans (HDSA). According to the mining charter HDSA refers to all persons and groups who have been discriminated against on the basis of race, gender and disability and women are one of those groups.

A major obstacle to women empowerment is women discrimination. To empower women there must be no discrimination of women in the workplace because its existence delays the transformation. Early identification of its will allow company stakeholders (e.g. Government, Employers, etc) to address the problem before it gets out of control, hence this study. This study focuses on this problem so that stakeholders can be made aware in order do something about it.

The study is conducted in the mining industry because this industry is a major employer is South Africa, therefore whatever happens in this industry affects the majority of the workforce in South Africa and the nation at large.

The study will assist the government, employers and human resource executives to understand the key issues that need to be addressed in order to alleviate women discrimination. The study will also enlighten mine management as to establish if they winning the battle of eliminating women discrimination in the mining industry. The study

will make a contribution to the knowledge that has already been acquired by other researches regarding this topic of women discrimination in the workplace.

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research objectives are divided into primary objectives and secondary objectives.

1.4.1 Primary Objective

The main objective of this study is to determine the perceptions of female employees within the gold and platinum mines in South Africa, regarding the existence of women discrimination in the South African mining industry

1.4.2 Secondary Objective

The secondary objectives of this study are to determine and explore:

- the prevalence of women discrimination in the mining sector,
- whether women report discrimination to the superiors,
- the effects of women discrimination, and
- what can be done to eliminate women discrimination.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The sample is drawn from different gold and platinum mines in South Africa's within the Gauteng province and North West province. The gold mines include AngloGold Ashanti, Gold Fields, and Harmony and the platinum mines involve Impala and Lonmin.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research method consists of a literature review as well as an empirical study.

1.6.1 Literature study

Information will be obtained from published and unpublished sources such as books, journals, articles, thesis, dissertations, internet and other resources relating to the topic. The main objective of this section besides establishing what was already discovered by other researchers, it is to create a theoretical base for the compilation of the survey questionnaire.

1.6.2 Empirical study

For the purpose of this study a qualitative research method will be used. This research method is ideal to determine the subjective thoughts and experiences of women working in the South African mining industry. Despite the negativity surrounding the use of qualitative research, Woods and Catanzaro (1988) indicated that the validity of qualitative research is one of its biggest advantages. An interview based on the phenomenological method, is used as a method for gathering the data (Moustakas, 1994). Before the interviews are conducted an open-ended questionnaire will be designed. This questionnaire will be used during the interviews. Once the questionnaire is complete, interview appointments are secured with the relevant people.

A hypothesis is not formulated because of the exploratory nature of the study. The emphasis of the study is on discovering undefined women discrimination practices and confirmation of prior research from the employees' viewpoint.

1.6.2.1 Questionnaire design

A semi-structured interview questionnaire is designed. The questionnaire will be divided into two sections. The first section consists of multiple-choice questions and the second section consists of open ended probing questions. The questionnaire is divided into three sections. Section A, covered the biographical details of the respondents; Section

B, covered employment details; and Section C, covered the respondents' perceptions on perceived woman discrimination in the mining industry.

1.6.2.2 Study population

The population for the study is female employees from different gold and platinum mines found in South Africa's within the Gauteng province and North-West province. The gold mines are AngloGold Ashanti, Gold Fields, and Harmony and the platinum mines are Impala and Lonmin. These employees are black females in management, professional and labourer positions. A sample size of 30 females employed in mines will be set as the target. The sampling method used for the study is the snowball sampling method. This method refers to a variety of procedures in which initial respondents are selected by probability methods, but in which additional respondents are then obtained from information provided by the initial respondent (Struwig & Stead, 2004).

1.6.2.3 Gathering of data

Data is gathered by means of a semi-structured interview using a semi-structured questionnaire to standardize the data collection process. After designing the questionnaire and pilot testing it, interviews will be scheduled and later conducted. The interviews are conducted in venues with enough ventilation, lightning and comfortable chairs. They are conducted on one-on-one bases, face to face or telephonically in instances where it is impossible to meet with the respondents. Interviews are recorded with the permission of the interviewee and later transcribed verbatim.

The candidates are put at ease before the start of the interviews. The researcher will introduce herself at the beginning of each interview and also explains the context of the interview (Struwig & Stead, 2004). During the interview non-directive dialogue techniques like attentive body language, reflection, clarification, minimal encouragement and silence are used to assist the participant to share her experience (Meulenberg-Buskens, 1994).

1.6.2.4 Data analysis

Content analysis is used to analyse and interpret the research data in a systematic, objective and quantitative way (Giorgi, 1985). Content analysis refers to the gathering and analysis of textual content. The content refers to messages, e.g. words, meanings, symbols and themes. The central idea in content analysis is that the many words of the text are classified into considerably fewer content categories. The following steps will be followed for content analysis, in line with the recommendations of Calitz (2004):

- The first step is to universalise the context that needs to be analysed (for example all the verbal answers of the participants), to be defined and to be categorised.
- The second step is to determine the subunits of the analysis, namely words and themes. The researcher reads the responded notes in order to get the whole picture. Afterwards she reads through it again in order to determine the themes. The words which were used by the participant, is the smallest analysis that can be made. A subtheme is usually a sentence and is more difficult but also more useful to analyse. Subthemes can be combined in order to determine the themes. The analysis of the information goes on until repeated themes have been identified.
- The third step is to get rid of the unnecessary information and to determine the meaning of the rest of the subunits by linking it to the whole picture.
- The fourth step consists of the conversion of the concrete language that's been used by the participants, to scientific language and concepts. The precise words of the participants are used in support. An integration and synthesis is then done based on received insights.
- The amount of objects per category were counted and placed in order of preference.

1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Limitation of this study is that the study considers the opinions of a few females and not the opinions of the entire workforce of the mining industry. Men's opinion or perceptions regarding the subject matter are not considered.

The results might not be representative of the views of all the women in the mining workforce because the study is only conducted in gold mines located in Gauteng Province and platinum mines located in North West Province in South Africa. Women working in other mines, for an example diamond, coal, copper, etc mines are excluded in the study.

1.8 LAYOUT OF THE STUDY

The study is structured into five chapters as follows:

- Chapter 1:
This chapter provides the introduction to the study of perceived women discrimination in the South African mining industry. It discusses the objectives of the study, the background to the study, the problem statement, the scope of the study, research methodology and limitations of the study
- Chapter 2
This chapter focuses on the literature review on women discrimination in the South African mining industry. It focuses on the definition of women discrimination, the history of women discrimination in the mining industry and the current state. It investigates the types and forms of women discrimination that are prevalent in this industry, looks at the causes of this behaviour and what are the victims doing about the incidences.
- Chapter 3
This chapter discusses the research methodology used for the empirical study. It discusses questionnaire development, sampling strategy, data collection and data analysis procedures to be employed.
- Question 4
The chapter covers data analyses and interpretation of results
- Chapter 5
This final chapter presents the conclusions and gives recommendations.

1.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provides the introduction to the study of perceived women discrimination in the South African mining industry and provided the background, the problem statement, the scope and objectives of the study, as well as the research methodology and limitations of the study

Chapter 2 review the literature on women discrimination in general as well as it's manifestation in the mining sector in South Africa.